

Summary and Conclusions

From the perspective of decades, the Apparatebau camp appears as a rather monotonous place, lacking the tragic depth of Auschwitz or the deathly silence that cries out from the stones of Treblinka.

Many of the witnesses did not know what to say when asked what the dramatic events were that took place in the camp. But even within the small group of HASAG camps in the *Generalgouvernement*, the study reveals the differences - each had its own history and its own character.

This rule also applies to the HASAG-Apparatebau camp.

The most characteristic feature of the camp in question – is the simultaneous use of the two names: “Pelcery” and “Apparatebau”. This happened due to a phenomenon unknown in the histories of other HASAG camps.

In the first track, we saw the transformations of a team of Jewish workers from the Apparatebau factory, which lasted from September 1942 (the core of the team still existed during the period of the “Big Ghetto”) until the establishment of the permanent camp. This transformation included two stages - impermanent “storage” of hundreds of workers in the factory halls and residency in the “Small Ghetto”, which became a “forced labour camp for Jews in Częstochowa”.

In the second track, we followed the work of prisoners and their lives in the factory. Only in June 1943, when a permanent camp was established on the factory grounds and all the workers of Apparatebau gathered in it, that the two tracks were united and considered as one camp, which is the HASAG-Apparatebau camp, which existed until the liberation in January 1945.

As mentioned, Apparatebau was the largest amongst the four camps of the “HASAG Kingdom” in Częstochowa. Therefore, both in terms of human composition and internal atmosphere, it can be seen as a kind of continuation of the “Small Ghetto”.

It is true that, in terms of **living conditions**, the nickname “health resort” (*Kurort*) was very relative - the prisoners, who came from the notorious camp in Skarżysko, saw the new place as a paradise. But the local Jews, who came straight from their homes, even those of the ghetto, felt that they had fallen into hell, because they suffered from bedbugs and lice, from the terrible overcrowding in the barracks, from rations of starvation and lack of clothing. But, as in the ghetto, the prisoners did not give up and, even in these conditions, they showed extraordinary resilience and invented additional sources of income with illegal crafts and trade.

The influence of the recent past was also felt in the patterns of social life in the camp. It should be noted that, until the arrival of the large transports from Łódź and Skarżysko, which only arrived at 1944, the local prisoner population was homogeneous in nature.

It was the locals, who “set the tone”, for good and for bad and, from them, emerged most of the prominent figures. In a medium-sized camp, where everyone knew each other, it was easier for the individual to find mates from the same neighbourhood, school and party circle.

This made it easier to establish various forms of communal life, a phenomenon that made the struggle for existence easier. Therefore, despite the differences in economic status and despite the gap between the wealthy and the common people, as before in the ghetto, mutual aid existed here, too, in its various forms.

There is no doubt that there was a real basis for expressions indicating feelings of solidarity and local patriotism - "There is among us, the people of Częstochowa, a special atmosphere, people take care of each other".

If, in the ghetto, the Jews still tried to observe religious customs and traditions, they did not give up on this task under conditions a thousand times more difficult in the camp. Prayer circles were organised, holiday customs were remembered (at least symbolically) and Torah lessons were held secretly.

But this did not satisfy the general populace. According to the few remaining sources, we have seen that, despite the hard labour, despite the hunger and terror, the prisoners tried to get at least a little taste of a "normal" life. There were love affairs and there were dates, there was secret reading of a newspaper stolen from the camp, there were political debates and friendly conversations.

They wrote songs and sketches. There were concerts and performances, recitations and poetry. It was those moments of happiness and excitement that restored the prisoners' human dignity. They are the evidence that they were not just robots, obedient machine slaves.

And in terms of continuity, was the fighting spirit, that pulsed in the hearts of the youth in the "Small Ghetto" also transferred with the remnants of the fighters to the camp?

Here it should be mentioned that, in **Częstochowa, the fate and size of the underground movement was intertwined with the existence of HASAG factories**. On the one hand, they became a lifeline for thousands of Jews, but on the other hand, they constituted a brake that reduced the active joining of youth to the ranks of the fighters and prevented the absorption of the idea of rebellion among the masses.

Therefore, the underground leaders, who remained in the camp, had preferred to give up on the idea of resistance in practice and acted according to the rule "you need to save what you can", because the end of the war is approaching.

So far, the conclusions have only addressed the prisoner population. But, as mentioned, for different reasons, the factory became a second camp for them. There was no layer of Polish overseers or Jewish policemen here. For these reasons, despite all the prohibitions and warnings, the relationship between the prisoners and the German administrators (especially at lower ranks) was much more direct and unmediated, for better and for worse.

That multifaceted and complicated relationship, between the Germans and the Jews, was closely related to the main question – **why was the Apparatebau factory established?** Seemingly, the question is ridiculous - of course, to produce ammunition. But what were its hidden goals?

The starting point is the winter of 1941/42, when the German offensive on the Eastern Front was halted. At that time, there were people in Germany, who understood that the failure of the “Barbarossa Operation” predicted the defeat of the Wehrmacht. Among those, who always saw one step ahead was Paul Budin and, in my opinion, even then he began to be preoccupied with the thought – of what would happen the day after.

Which means that, even in this war, which no one knew how it will end, the power resources of the HASAG concern had to be preserved so that, after the war, it can recover quickly and move on to different production. This means that the two main components of production must be preserved - professionals and the invested capital.

To this end, essential jobs must be established that can protect workers from the danger of conscription and, on the other hand, it is necessary to economise, especially in work wages, in order to increase capital reserves. Both wishes could be fulfilled by weapons and ammunition production factories with a Jewish workforce.

This explains the riddle - by the summer of 1942, HASAG already had the commissar management of the factories in Skarżysko, Kielce and the foundry in Raków. In Skarżysko alone, nearly 10,000 Poles worked and produced seventeen types of ammunition. Why was another factory in Częstochowa needed? And once it was established, **why did it constantly encounter various production difficulties?**

First, they built generators, which rusted and there was no one to sell them to. At the same time, they opened a *Rekalibrierung* branch, which was supposed to renew used cartridges – a large part of which would be returned to the factory, because they rusted along the way. In a April 1943 on the production of 2 cm cartridges, we read with astonishment that, from approximately 730,000 bullet casings, only 4,000 were suitable for combat ammunition!!

Is it any wonder that the reporting officer asks, **in light of such results, if the entire process of renewing the casings is even worthwhile?**¹ He did not dare to write, but the thought must have crossed his mind, of how 3,500 Jews were being held for such a production.

A truly innocent question. It was very profitable thanks to the “**ransom system**”. Every German who hit a Jew knew, that this harmed the level of production, because his beatings reduced the victim’s physical fitness and extorting the ransom prevented him from buying another ration of bread.

But the money interested the *Meister* more than ammunition for the Eastern Front. Each new *Meister* quickly went through the “**training course for extorting money from Jews**” in order to begin implementing its principles as soon as possible. The methods of extortion were various - receiving a fixed pension, receiving a ransom through a Jewish overseer in exchange for stopping the beatings, being removed from the list of candidates for transport in exchange for a fee, receiving permission to make deals with the Poles in exchange for sharing the profits, payment for transfer to another workplace, and more.

¹ See Chapter Nine, note 11.

And what about the hefty payment for helping organise an escape? And what about currency exchange? How did *Meister Horn* accumulate 120,000 marks in just a few years?!

He openly admitted that all the Germans in the factory, from simple labourers to the director, tried to make a profit by exchanging currency for Jews. Thus, the Jewish camp became a source of demoralisation for the German staff.

“Hence the conclusion that the temporary rescue of Jews by Lütt and his ilk did not stem from humanitarian considerations, but purely from selfish ones.

‘For these prominent Nazis and their thousands of helpers, the Jewish slaves became an excellent refuge from the danger of being drafted to the Eastern Front and a source of easy profits, all under the guise of useful work and selfless sacrifice for the benefit of the German *Vaterland*.’²

This simple truth was known and understood by every prisoner of *Apparatebau*. And as for Director Lütt, he also knew that Germany was marching towards doom and, in my opinion, wanted to prepare himself an alibi for the day of doom. To his credit, it must be said that he succeeded until the last moment in preventing the SS from interfering in the affairs of the camp and tried to improve the nutritional conditions of the prisoners.

In fairness, it should be noted that, in the attitude of the Germans towards the prisoners, there were cases of showing mercy, providing assistance and even saving lives.

The “ransom system” was understood very quickly by the *Werkschutz*, and we have seen that it caused indescribable suffering. In contrast, no testimony appeared of any complaints about beatings by the Poles.

Actually, what stands out is the relatively large number of cases of help to Jews, without any return, according to the well-known saying in Poland, “Every *goy* had his own Jew.” This explains the words of one of the prisoners:

“In *Częstochowa*, the Christians were of a different material... In *Skarżysko* they were great antisemites.”³

In truth, the validity of the good attitude expired on the day of liberation. According to most testimonies, the Poles received the Jews with the words “Have so many still survived?” and expelled them from their homes.

As for the Jews, the “system” did occasionally save lives. But, overall, it had a devastating effect on the social situation. As mentioned, the gap between rich and poor widened and hostile relations deepened. Likewise, there were also overseers, who jumped on the bandwagon and also wanted to get rich easily at the expense of the prisoners.

² Kromołowski, *Wspomnienia*, p. 566

³ Testimony of Szmul Bornsztajn, YVA, 0.3/6784.

Are these conclusions also relevant to the other HASAG camps? The answer requires comprehensive comparative research.

In the meantime, the story of the HASAG-Apparatebau camp history is complete. Those who remained, began to ask. "Who is to blame? Who is to blame for us having been left on our own, for our families being murdered and for us having been left homeless? **Who did this to us?**"

In October 1965, a memorial service for Częstochowa survivors was held in Tel-Aviv on the anniversary of the Treblinka deportations. One of the speakers was Jeszajahu Landau, the same Landau from whose arms his wife and daughter were torn on the very first day of the *akcja*. And he replied:

"The answer is clear - the entire German people as a nation! The state of Germany, as a state! And every German individually, who lived in the Holocaust generation! ... We are not talking about pogroms here, but about the operation of a method planned in its details and stages, the implementation of which required the operation of millions of people from different strata, including the intelligentsia, people of science, technology, art – an entire nation!

"The aspirations of the German people, deeply rooted in them, and the feeling of the superiority of the master race, are what supposedly gave them the right to rule over others.

"And why did they fight the Jews in particular? Because they are a people loyal to the doctrine of the sanctity of life and humane spiritual values. The Germans knew that, without taking control of the spiritual values of humanity, which are spread according to their opinion by Jews, it would be difficult to enslave the entire world to the rule of the Reich."⁴

And the meaning of these words - Hitler's war against the Jews is a fight between two ideological concepts.

Even if one agrees with this view, there is no doubt that *Meister Spalteholz* did not read *Mein Kampf*. For Christmas, he sent his wife a fur coat, which he "found" in one of the abandoned apartments in the ghetto.

Karl Opel too, the famous "Morsch", certainly did not read the writings of Alfred Rosenberg. For Easter, he sent home a package with sausage, cheese and two pairs of shoes.

His supervisor, Birenholc, took care of everything

Last Sunday there was another management meeting at the factory. Brettschneider, as always, was going on about the front, rise of quotas, that the *Führer* himself was interested in our factory. Just talking.

Can you work with those Jews? Regarding the Jews... I have two beautiful rings in my pocket, which I got – a real joke, because I taught them a lesson... One for my wife, the other for my daughter, who is getting married soon... Is the meeting already over?.

⁴ Words of J. Landau on Memorial Day for the Częstochowa Community, Tel-Aviv, 31st October 1965, Yad Vashem, 65-878.

Forty years have passed.

In 2005, Götz Aly's book *Hitlers Volksstaat* was published.⁵ Aly does not dwell on the issues of the ideological conflict. In his opinion, the driving force behind the Holocaust was the Nazi leadership's interest in profiting, as much as possible, from the wealth and property of the murdered European Jews.

In this way, the rulers of the Reich could shower the masses with various social benefits in order to buy their support. In one of his lectures, Aly declared,

"Anyone, who does not want to talk about the many benefits for millions of ordinary Germans, would do better to remain silent about National Socialism and the Holocaust."

In other words, according to Aly, the blame for the Holocaust falls on ninety percent of the Germans, who derived direct personal benefit from it.

This theory is not accepted by many researchers. Rightly so – it is too simplistic.

But what can you do, that Spalteholz and Opel, the two *Meisters* from Apparatebau factory, they and their many friends, the gendarmerie men, Schupo, Gestapo, the administration officials, *Kripo* and others, who robbed, beat and killed, are conclusive proof of its rightness.

In order to loot the property of 40,000 Jews, who lived in the twenty-eight streets of the "Big Ghetto", they first had to get rid of the inhabitants. Did **they** need an ideology for this? Of course they did. Because the theory of a holy war against the enemies of humanity justified their actions, cleansed their consciences.

But it is not only these crimes that must torment the conscience of the German people.

In his testimony, Dawid Krakauer writes:

"What the Germans cannot be forgiven for is not only the murder and the extermination, but the same policy of reducing man to the level of an animal, a worm, whose only desire is to live!

"The humiliation, the breaking of the human spirit, is not forgiven. **This is unforgivable. No one stood up against it.**"⁶

And at the end, maybe we will hear what the former "Masters of Europe" think about their plans for the future?

⁵ Götz Aly, *Hitlers Volksstaat, Raub, Rassenkrieg und nationaler Sozialismus*, S.Fischer Verlag, 2005

⁶ Testimony of Dawid Krakauer, YVA, 0-33/6940.

The Party's Song of Songs

Plunder-mad, drunk of greed,
We, scoundrels, mimed the heroes.
We smashed half the world to pieces,
To inherit the whole.

Ou enemy's land and our enemy's gold
Is our loot and also our pay.
For the vanquished – doom,
A beautiful dream... the dream is gone.

Our motto: "Might Before Justice"
Won't carry us far this time.
Even the SS will not help!
What remains? Only to retreat,

To beg for mercy,
So filled with guilt...
That our enemies will not judge us.
They will fall into the trap! They are so stupid!

And if the plan succeeds,
We will start it all over again,
For no German may thrive
But in the throes of victory!⁷

Translation [into Hebrew]: Chaim Karay

⁷ Source: See Chapter 14, note 39.

Das Hohe Lied der Partei

Raubbegeistert, habgiertrunken,
Mimten Helden wir, Halunken,
Schlugen halbe Welt in Scherben,
Um die ganze zu beerben.

Feindes Land und Feindes Gold –

Unsere Beute, unser Sold.

Den Besiegten der Garaus.

Schoener Traum. Der Traum ist aus.

Unser Wahlspruch: „Macht vor Recht“,

Der bekam uns diesmal schlecht.

Selbst SS kann nichts erreichen.

Was bleibt uebrig? Nur noch weichen,

Fleh'n die Feinde um Erbarmen,

Dass sie uns, den reuh'gen Armen

Alle Untat neh'm nicht krumm,

Fall'n drauf rein. Sie sind so dumm.

Und gelingt uns dieser Plan,

Fangen wir von vorne an.

Denn anders als im Siegeswahne

Kann gedeihen kein Germane.